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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to investigate at two elementary grade levels, the fourth and the sixth: the relationship between children's self-evaluations of self esteem and adjustment; the relationship between teachers' evaluations of children's self esteem and adjustment; and the relationship between teacher and child judgments of adjustment, and of self esteem. Subjects were 214 fourth-grade and 213 sixth grade children from two elementary schools in a middle to working class suburb outside Rochester, New York. The child's own assessment of his own adjustment was measured by the California Test of Personality, 1953 revision. Teachers' evaluation of children's adjustment was gauged on a six item scale based on five of Jahoda's six criteria of adjustment. The self report of children's self esteem was obtained by using a modification of the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory. Teachers rated self esteem in children on Coopersmith's Behavior Rating Form, consisting of 13 five-point scaled items. Three visits to the classroom were required to complete the testing. The results suggest that, at least on the measures selected, teachers and children perceive that children's self esteem is moderately to highly and positively related to personal and social adjustment. Self esteem and adjustment scores correlated highly, as did teacher's estimates of children's self esteem and adjustment but teachers' child agreement on self esteem and adjustment dimensions were lower. (Author/JM)

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Abstract

This study investigated at the fourth and sixth grade levels: the relationship between children's self evaluations of self esteem and adjustment; the relationship between teachers' evaluations of children's self esteem and adjustment; and the relationship between teacher and child judgments of adjustment, and of self esteem. Self esteem and adjustment scores correlated highly as did teachers' estimates of children's self esteem and adjustment but teacher-child agreement on self esteem and adjustment dimensions were lower. Apparently, both teachers and children view the two concepts as being highly related but their judgment of the presence of these dimensions may be determined by different factors. Considerable variation in teacher-child agreement on both dimensions was noted across classrooms.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILD AND TEACHER EVALUATIONS OF SELF ESTEEM AND ADJUSTMENT IN FOURTH AND SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN

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With some notable exceptions (Bower & Hollister, 1967; Crow, 1968; Jahoda, 1958; Maslow, 1954; McKinney, 1960; Rogers, 1931; Sawrey & Telford, 1963; Tindall, 1959) the concept of positive emotional adjustment has received relatively little attention from psychological investigators. If and when the term adjustment is used at all, it is likely to refer to some degree of success in coping with psychopathology or, at best, the relative absence of emotional disorder (Bills, Vance, & McClean, 1951; Block & Thomas, 1955; Calvin & Holtzman, 1953; Manis, 1958). The majority of the existing investigations of the concept of adjustment have consisted primarily of careful, naturalistic observations of extremely well-adjusted adult subjects (e.g., Barron, 1963; Maslow, 1954). While these efforts have been valuable much more is to be learned of the nature of adjustment, particularly about those antecedents and correlates which occur in the developing child.

One covariate of possible importance is self esteem. Jersild (1952) has suggested that self esteem is a crucial antecedent to positive psychological adjustment whereas Chodorkoff (1954) and Block and Thomas (1955) have reported evidence which suggests that self esteem is not directly related to adjustment and that it can even be an indication of maladjustment when

possessed to an extreme degree. Several provocative studies of the concept of self esteem have been reported (e.g., Beebe, 1970; Sawrey & Telford, 1963; Silverman, 1964a, 1964b) and some of the most definitive work has been done by Coopersmith (1959, 1967) who defines self esteem as "...the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy" (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 5). Unfortunately, while self esteem seems to have invited careful scrutiny by several examiners, empirical investigations of its potential link to adjustment have not been concluded (Crow, 1968; Maslow, 1954; Sawrey & Telford, 1963). Indeed, where the concept of self esteem has been most extensively investigated (Coopersmith, 1959, 1967), any ties with adjustment have been largely overlooked.

In measuring adjustment, most investigators have utilized either self report techniques or the judgments and evaluations of independent observers (Bills, Vance, & McClean, 1951; Taylor & Combs, 1952; Williams & Cole, 1968). Some theorists espoused the idea that positive adjustment is best measured by using both subjective report and external observations (Jahoda, 1958; Maslow, 1954). However, only two investigators (Tindall, 1959; Winthrop, 1959) have addressed this question of congruence. It would seem profitable, then, to conduct further investigations of the relationship between self esteem and adjustment in children using both self report and external judgment techniques.

The personage of the external judge is of crucial importance. Second only to the parent as a potentially powerful influence upon the growth of the child is his teacher and, therefore, the degree of child-teacher congruence regarding self esteem and adjustment would seem to be of considerable interest. Further, in view of Beebe's (1970) work indicating age differences in self esteem scores, it would seem logical to investigate developmental

relationships in the relationships between self esteem and adjustment.

Hence, the purposes of the present study were to investigate at two elementary grade levels: the relationship between children's self evaluations of self esteem and adjustment; the relationship between teachers' evaluations of children's self esteem and adjustment; and the relationships between teacher and child judgments of adjustment, and of self esteem.

Method

Subjects

The sample was drawn from eight regular fourth-grade and eight regular sixth-grade classes from two elementary schools in a middle to working class suburt outside Rochester, New York. In all, 214 fourth-grade children and 213 sixth-grade children served as subjects. The children were heterogeneously grouped in both schools.

Instruments and Observations

Adjustment

The child's assessment of his own adjustment was measured by the California Test of Personality, 1953 Revision (CTP), (Thorpe, Clark, & Tiegs, 1959). The CTP yields a personal (CTPP), a social (CTPS) and a total (CTPT) score. Form AA of the primary series was administered to the fourth grade and form AA of the elementary series was used for the sixth grade. Teachers' evaluation of children's adjustment was gauged on a six item scale based on five of Jahoda's (1958) six criteria of adjustment. Dimensions used were attitudes toward the self, integration, self determination (two items relating to school achievement and general adaptation), perception of reality, and environmental mastery. Each item was rated on a three-point scale (with three being a high rating) and the sum of the scores reflecting overall adjustment.

Since the teacher rating of child adjustment was not standardized, item intercorrelations and an internal reliability coefficient were computed.[2] Additional, face valid, evidence of the scale's accuracy was obtained by asking the teachers during the first testing session to nominate the four "most well-adjusted" and the four "least well-adjusted" youngsters in their class. Adjustment was briefly defined for the teachers as "positive adjustment or mental health."

Self Esteem

The self report of children's self esteem was obtained by using a modification of the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (CSEI - Coopersmith, 1967). In place of the labels "like me" and "unlike me" above the columns in which the child was to respond, the words "true" or "false" were used. Teachers rated self esteem in children on Coopersmith's Behavior Rating Form (BRF), consisting of thirteen 5-point scaled items.

Testing Procedure

Three visits to the classroom were required to complete the testing. During the first session, the CSEI was administered. In the fourth-grade classes each item was read aloud twice in order to eliminate misunderstandings or misinterpretations arising from reading difficulties. In the sixth grade each subject read the questionnaire to himself but assistance was available if he encountered any difficult words or ideas. At the same time the teacher completed the six-item adjustment scale for each child in the class.

The second visit to the classroom consisted of the administration of the first part of the CTP. Again, the items were read aloud to the fourth graders while the sixth graders read the scale by themselves and were assisted if necessary.

Unfortunately, the majority of teachers preferred not to complete BRFs on all children in their classes which required a compromise that would insure at least a minimal amount of adequate data. Hence, teachers completed BRFs on those children obtaining the top five and bottom five scores on the CSEI. In the third visit the second part of the CTP was administered in the same manner as the first two visits.

Data Analysis

While Pearson rs were used to correlate variables when data were continuous and apparently normal, alternative procedures had to be used in several cases. First, since the BRFs were completed only on the five top and five bottom scoring youngsters on the CSEI, a markedly split distribution ensued which would tend to inflate resultant Pearson rs. Of several alternative coefficients, Kendall's tau (λ) was selected because it is sufficiently insensitive to parametric deviations, yet adequately powerful. The teacher nominations for the four "most well adjusted" and the four "least well adjusted" youngsters in their classes were correlated with the teacher adjustment ratings using a point biserial coefficient (point biserial was used because the split nature of the dichotomy warranted a rather conservative technique).

Since a possible curvilinear relationship existed between self esteem and adjustment measures, scatter plots were made of all complete (split distributions were not plotted) self esteem-adjustment contingency relationships and the two plots judged to be the most likely to reflect a curvilinear relationship were analyzed by squaring the predictor variables and comparing the error of prediction afforded by this procedure to error of prediction obtained with the unsquared predictor by means of an F test.[3] Fourth and sixth grade rs were compared with Fisher's z' technique and a comparison

of λs was made via Kendall's use of the normal deviate as suggested by Kendall (1970). Within rater agreement was compared to within dimension agreement using the following procedure. Pearson rs reflecting child-child agreement on self esteem and adjustment were compared to rs reflecting child-teacher agreement ratings on adjustment with t-tests for correlation coefficients for correlated samples (Ferguson, 1966). The possible comparisons within each grade level were: 1) child personal adjustment (CTPP) as it related to a) child self esteem (CSEI) and b) teacher estimate of adjustment; 2) child social adjustment (CTPS) as it related to a) child self esteem (CSEI) and b) teacher estimate of adjustment; and 3) child total adjustment (CTPT) as it related to a) child self esteem (CSEI) and b) teacher estimate of adjustment. Unfortunately, the significance of differences in estimates of the relationship between child-teacher agreement on self esteem measures and teacher-teacher agreement on self esteem and adjustment could not be computed because of the mixture of Pearson rs and Kendall's λs (child-teacher self esteem and teacher self esteem adjustment correlations were λs but the third necessary coefficient for the comparison, child self esteem-teacher adjustment, was appropriately a Pearson r), and because no standard procedure was available by which to compare Kendall's λs based on correlated samples. Teacher-child agreement coefficients were listed by teacher to gain a view of possible variations among teachers.

Results

Item intercorrelations for the teachers' adjustment scale ranged from .38 to .71 (Mdn. = .60) for the fourth graders and from .26 to .65 (mdn. = .52) for the sixth graders. The internal consistency coefficient was .90 and correlations of the scale with teacher nominations were .90 and .91 at the fourth and sixth grade levels indicating an acceptable degree of test

integrity. It is interesting that at the fourth grade level no significant sex by nomination differences were found ($\chi^2 = .95$, df = 1) but that more boys were nominated as being poorly adjusted at the sixth grade level ($\chi^2 = 4.59$, df = 1).

Visual inspection of scatter plots for the relation of child self esteem (CSEI) and total adjustment (CTPT) scores, and for the relation of child self esteem to social adjustment (CTPS) scores suggested a very slight tendency toward curvilinearity. Fs for the former relationships were 1.86 (df = 1, 211) and < 1.00 (df = 1, 199) for fourth and sixth grade samples and, for the latter relationships, Fs for fourth and sixth grades were 1.53 (df = 1, 211) and < 1.00 (df = 1, 199) clearly indicating no statistical evidence of curvilinearity.

Scale-scale correlation matrices for fourth and sixth graders are summarized in Table 1. For ease of visual inspection Table 2 provides a

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Insert Tables 1 & 2 about here

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tabulation of coefficients by rater and dimension. Grade comparisons yielded no statistically significant differences for either Pearson rs or Kendall's $\underline{\lambda}$ s.

Inspection of Table 2 suggests that teacher-child agreement on the same dimensions is considerably lower than within teacher and within child agreement on different dimensions. For example, at the fourth grade level, the within adjustment correlations are .43, .30 and .44 (each of the three child adjustment scores correlated with the teacher adjustment score) whereas the within child coefficients are .73, .51 and .74 (each of the three child adjustment scores correlated with the child self esteem score). Statistical comparison of these three sets of coefficients (e.g., .43 vs. .73; .30 vs. .51 and .44 vs. .74) yielded the following t ratios (for correlation coefficients for

correlated samples): 5.74 (df = 200), 3.16 (df = 203) and 6.94 (df = 200). The same comparisons at the sixth grade level yielded ts of 5.61 (df = 174), 5.72 (df = 172) and 6.91 (df = 171). While similar statistical comparisons were not possible for the intra-self-esteem ratings vs. the intra-teacher ratings, the obtained λs of .35 and .67 for fourth graders and .31 and .59 for sixth graders indicate, at the very least, that intra-concept scores do not exceed intra-method scores.

Coefficients reflecting teacher-child agreement levels are listed by individual teacher in Table 3. Fourth grade classes are taught by teachers

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Insert Table 3 about here

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one through eight; sixth grade classes are taught by teachers nine through sixteen. Inspection suggests that considerable variation in teacher-child agreement exists across teachers as evidenced by the ranges (e.g., .07 to .65 for child self esteem and teacher self esteem, and .31 to .72 for child social adjustment and teacher self esteem). Range comparisons were not attempted on relationships reflected by Kendall's λs since the Ns ranged from only 10 to 13, thus making the use of the normal deviate, as suggested by Kendall, a rather dubious procedure. However, the use of a Fisher's z' statistic on the smallest Pearson r range spread (.07 to .68 for child self esteem and teacher adjustment) yields a ratio of 2.50 which is well above the level required at $p \leq .05$ suggesting that, indeed, teacher agreement with children varies notably with the individual teacher. While teacher error is suspected in the case of low teacher-child agreement, the reason may have been low child concept agreement in these classes. However, inspection of within child agreement data by classroom (not reported here because of lack of space) suggests that this is not the case as agreement was generally high (e.g.,

CSEI-CTPP coefficients ranged from .47 to .89 (mdn. = .735).

Discussion

The scale developed to provide a quick estimate of teachers' ratings of children's adjustment appeared to have an acceptable degree of reliability and validity. The brevity of the scale, of course, limits its ultimate power but, on the other hand, teachers will more willingly complete this short scale on all children in their classes than scales whose greater power require greater length.

The major question of this study concerned the relationship between self esteem and adjustment. The results suggest that, at least on the measures we selected, teachers and children perceive that children's self esteem is moderately to highly and positively related to personal and social adjustment. These results are complicated by the fact that intra-concept agreement between teachers and children is considerably lower than intra-rater judgments of the two concepts. The trend was evident in both fourth and sixth grade samples. The two concepts seem to be moderately to highly related in the raters' perceptions (minds) but congruence of perception is moderate to low. It may be that teachers and children are perceiving somewhat different things or that they are interpreting things somewhat differently. One possible clue can be gained from other evidence (Green, R.F., unpublished study comparing self ratings of self concept of first graders with teachers' ratings of the children's self concepts, both in turn being correlated with academic achievement) suggesting that teachers are more apt to relate self esteem to academic achievement than are the youngsters. This differential in covariance with achievement would perhaps lower teacher-child agreement across concepts. Unfortunately, achievement data was not gathered in this study but in future investigations of this issue it would seem desirable to do so.

The variation in teacher-child agreement across classrooms was an interesting phenomenon. The overall view of the data did not suggest that relatively low teacher-child agreement was the result of low child-child agreement (hence, high error) as the latter was moderately high. Whether these variations are the result of simple disagreement, differential attention to other correlates (e.g., achievement, teacher insensitivity, etc.) cannot be determined in the present study. However, since congruence of teachers' perception with their children would seem to be a reasonable psycho-educational goal, further research aimed at evaluating these various alternatives would seem to be warranted.

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Footnotes

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[2]The following modification of the Spearman-Brown formula was used:

$$r_{tt} = \frac{n\, r_{it}^2}{1 + (n - 1)\, r_{it}^2}$$

[3]The following statistic was used:

$$F = \frac{(R^2_{x+y} - R^2_x)/df}{(1 - R^2_{x+y})/ N - df_x - df_y - 1}$$

Table 1

Scale-Scale Correlation Matrix:

Fourth Grade

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CSEI		.35($\underline{\lambda}$)*	.73	.51	.74	.37
2. BRF			.30($\underline{\lambda}$)	.34($\underline{\lambda}$)	.36($\underline{\lambda}$)	.67($\underline{\lambda}$)
3. CTPP				.48	.89	.43
4. CTPS					.82	.30
5. CTPT						.44
6. Tchr. Adj.						

Sixth Grade

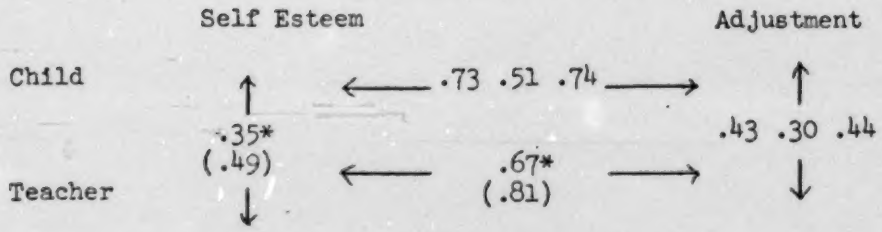
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CSEI		.31($\underline{\lambda}$)	.68	.59	.72	.34
2. BRF			.35($\underline{\lambda}$)	.24($\underline{\lambda}$)	.31($\underline{\lambda}$)	.59($\underline{\lambda}$)
3. CTPP				.62	.91	.33
4. CTPS					.88	.19
5. CTPT						.30
6. Tchr. Adj.						

*Coefficients noted with ($\underline{\lambda}$) are Kendall's taus. Ns for $\underline{r}$s and $\underline{\lambda}$s vary slightly from maximum values because of missing data.

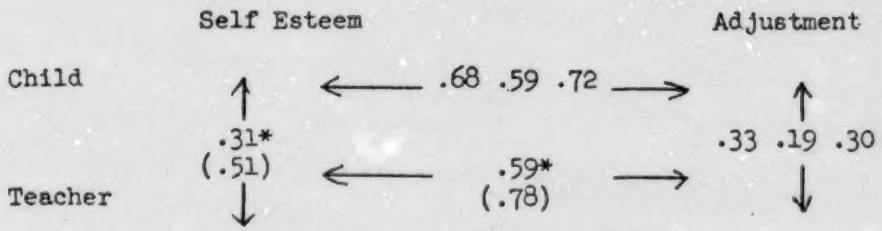
Table 2

Schematic of Correlational Relationships:

Fourth Grade



Sixth Grade



*Coefficients noted with an asterisk are Kendall's taus. Pearson r_s are included within the parentheses for comparative purposes.

Table 3

Relationships Between Teacher and Child Measures by Classroom

Teacher	CSEI λ BRF	CSEI r Tchr Adj	CTPP r Tchr Adj	CTPS r Tchr Adj	CTPT r Tchr Adj	CTPP λ BRF	CTPS λ BRF	CTPT λ BRF
1.	.26	.51	.61	.44	.63	.53	.34	.45
2.	.70	.47	.59	.37	.58	.81	.23	.51
3.	.50	.58	.74	.52	.72	.72	.72	.82
4.	.34	.20	.35	.09	.28	.40	.55	.46
5.	.69	.39	.20	.17	.25	.53	.34	.46
6.	.50	.50	.47	.51	.58	.59	.52	.61
7.	.11	.28	.22	.26	.30	-.05	.41	.07
8.	.58	.07	.18	-.06	.05	.65	.37	.60
*9.	.46					.29	.23	.20
10.	.46	.29	.14	.20	.16	.30	.33	.44
11.	.27	.44	.51	.29	.48	.43	.41	.43
12.	.19	.49	.32	.23	.32	.51	.26	.36
13.	.69	.65	.65	.58	.68	.49	.39	.36
14.	.64	.21	.08	.50	.38	.12	.31	.26
15.	.00	.30	.50	-.13	.26	-.11	-.31	-.19
16.	.46	.54	.44	.22	.41	.52	.55	.55

*Adjustment scales not completed.